



HPI Interview: Lawson guards elections

From 2016 hacks and arrests, to the Trump election commission, to reelection, a busy year

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – Secretary of State Connie Lawson flatly asserted that she believes the 2016 elections in Indiana were not tampered with by the Russians and has full confidence in the results.

Her comments came during an exclusive HPI Interview last Friday at a time when she

is serving on the President's Advisory Commission on Election Integrity, a group selected by President Trump after he alleged that there was massive voter fraud in 2016. She confirmed to HPI, "The election results are absolutely unaltered and no votes have been changed."



She believes that the Russians hacked the Democratic National Committee, but does not know if it was the Russian government. "Now do I know whether it was the Russian government? No, I don't," she said.

The interview came after a tumultuous 2016 election, followed by the chaotic Trump White House. And it comes as Lawson is seeking a second full term. She is president of the National Secretaries of State Association and is serving on cyber security panels. "I have a full plate," she said several times during the interview in her Statehouse office.

Here is our HPI Interview with Secretary Lawson:

HPI: Rep. Dvorak wrote a letter to you earlier this sum-

Continued on page 3

Impeachment politics

By **MARK SOUDER**

FORT WAYNE – President Trump's completion of his four-year term may depend upon two things: The Republicans maintaining control of Congress, and being on good terms with fellow Republicans. Recently, those things aren't going so well. Certainly no Democrats are going to bail him out. He can divide his supporters but there are no signs of adding any new ones.

Some discussion of the history of impeachments provides insight about the arguments that continue to unfold. A few things are very clear. No vice president that survived a presidential impeachment went on to win a presidential elec-



“That really put me face to face with these addiction issues. I got to know families, mothers sitting on curbs, sobbing. I got to watch this play out at a level you just cannot ignore.”

- State Sen. Mike Crider.

He is running for 6th CD



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tion. Vice Presidents Andrew Johnson, Gerald Ford, and Al Gore never won at the national level post-impeachment. It isn't impossible that Vice President Pence could win nationally should President Trump be impeached, but he would be an American original.

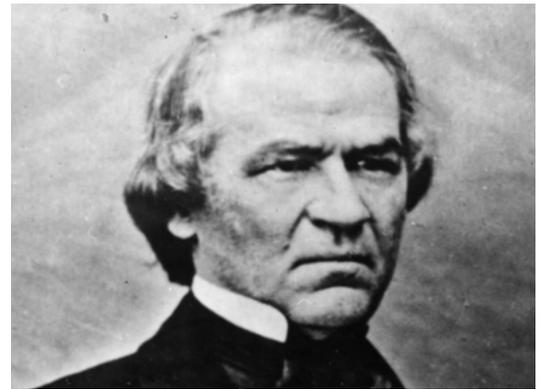
It is also clear that Trump threats of retribution at critics will have no impact on his potential of being impeached. If the Democrats win control of Congress, threats against them will only strengthen them among their base. He can cause Republican divisions that could cost Republicans seats, but that just means that there would be even more severely anti-Trump Democrats in office. There would be no message "learned." His future in office, not just his agenda, likely depends upon a Republican Congress.

A Democrat takeover in the 2018 elections would begin with tortuous, daily hearings and investigations that would make the 2017 Republican-conducted hearings look like love-fests. They would be drawn out to maximize impact on the 2020 presidential process. And the Clinton impeachment standard certainly lowered the threshold for overturning an election. Clinton survived because the Senate was split 50-50, and Vice President Gore was the tie-breaker.

You shouldn't just overturn elections because you don't agree with or are deeply offended by a president. Even some illegal behavior is not grounds for overturning an election or you get into endless battles over what "is" is. Not just about sex, but about whether weapons indirectly exchanged for hostages is sufficient cause. President Andrew Johnson escaped conviction because some Republicans sided with all the Democrats that even Johnson's defiance of Congress in implementing laws which protected basic rights for black Americans, won by the blood of the Civil War, was not sufficient grounds for impeachment.

The Republicans, and almost every Trump supporter, already sup-

ported the precedent of a much lower threshold for impeachment during the Clinton process just as Democrats are doing in the Trump era. The standard for impeachment has become lying or covering up actions, not actual treason or the original acts that led to the lying because, in fact, they may not be impeachable acts (even if provable). The Clinton process also established that impeachment didn't even need a single supporter from the other party, unlike the cases of John-



son and Nixon.

These standards have put our current president more at risk. His supporters, many of whom wanted to put Hillary Clinton in jail and remove Bill Clinton from office, now want the standard to be different. Now liberals want standards imposed that they opposed for Clinton. Whether or not you agreed or disagreed with the impeachment of Clinton, he definitely tried to cover up in his actions and used his White House staff to do so.

In other words, the survival of President Trump hinges upon two things: Maintaining a Republican Congress and that there are no more serious, proven revelations. Barring clear evidence that Trump himself was involved in or ordered illegal and impeachable (i.e. national interest) discussions with Russian operatives, Republicans are not going to impeach him. At this point and probably going forward, this entire debate will be largely partisan unless there is clearly sufficient evidence. Even Republicans who are relatively appalled by Trump are not going to join in partisan efforts, just as Democrats defended Clinton.

General John Kelly is likely to bring some order to the White House managerial process. But ultimately, he has huge challenges that could be beyond his personal experience and skills. Our political system is not like the military, and it should never become so. It is not autocratic. Only strong-armed, non-free governments are “run like the military.”

While I am traditionalist conservative, not a libertarian in ideological terms, part of the definition of being a conservative is to be skeptical of big government versus individual liberty. A democratic republic is not like the military. You can’t have leaks of classified security information when going to war. Leaks about differences of opinion on policies can actually help further political debate even if those in control don’t ever like them.

Politics requires listening, not ordering people around by a single leader. Voters elect congressmen and senators, governors, state legislators, mayors, city and county councils, and even surveyors and coroners. We don’t have one leader who is the boss of us and everybody else reports for duty. Governing is messy and requires negotiation and compromise.

General Kelly’s other problem is his boss. Relevant to the politics of impeachment, the president’s uncontrolled, often nasty and unstable outbursts against not

only the Republican Congress but at loyal allies including Attorney General Sessions and his long-time advisor Steve Bannon, suggests that, depending upon what evidence is uncovered (if it exists) about Russian or other matters, impeachment could move beyond partisanship. General Kelly needs to worry less about other leaks and more about controlling his boss.

These combustible dynamics undergird the 2018 Indiana Senate race. The Republicans are certainly going to lose a few seats, and Sen. Joe Donnelly represents one of the only possible gains. Donnelly’s skills as a politician have been vastly underestimated by Republicans over his career. He knows how to exploit weaknesses. He already knew the accusations being thrown around by Republicans against each other, and will use them effectively.

Donnelly’s bonus assistance regularly comes from the president. Trump called the House health care bill “mean.” He called the Republican senators “fools.” President Trump’s danger in writing campaign commercials for Democrats is that if they win control, then the impeachment battle will begin in earnest. ❖

Souder is a former Republican congressman. In 1999, he voted on two impeachment counts against President Clinton and voted against two others.

Lawson Interview, from page 1

mer asking whether Russian intelligence or hackers had probed or compromised Indiana’s election system. How did you respond to that inquiry? What do Hoosiers need to know?

Lawson: First, what Hoosiers need to know is the election results are absolutely unaltered and no votes have been changed in the 2016 election. Our focus has always been security of the elections, but starting about August of last year when we got the FBI notice that in two states – Illinois and a small county in Arizona – their statewide voter registration systems had been hacked, everything has been heightened ever since. I can’t think of a day in a week when we don’t spend an hour, two hours, sometimes six hours on cyber security in this office. But the answer is that Indiana did not get hacked. When we received the notice from the FBI, the Indiana Office of Technology, my staff, and the vendor which supports the statewide voting system, looked at the system. This shows how busy the



election process is. We examined 15,500,000 logins from the 92 county clerks’ offices. They were processing candidate filings, absentee ballot requests and petition signatures and all the things that counties do. So we were fine. Those IP addresses had not touched Indiana’s system. We felt very good about that but we are continuing to do everything we can because the worst thing we can do is believe that we don’t have any more work to do. That’s when we start worrying. We continue to work on it.

HPI: There were reports that some 30 states had been probed by nefarious Russian interests.

Lawson: There have been numerous reports. The Department of Homeland Security on the federal level says 21. Some other reports say 27. I’ve heard 30-some states. I think the problem is the communication and notification from the intelligence agencies that know, or who are making these statements. Of the 50 secretaries of state, in 40 states we are the chief election officials. Not one secretary has been notified that their system was endangered in any way. What I think the reports

mean, is what you would expect. Our systems are scanned multiple times a day, thousands of times a week. Some are by nefarious actors, some just curious who want to rattle the door knobs to see if any doors have been left open. We continue to work with our technology staff to make sure we haven't left any doors open.

HPI: So with 2018 and 2020 right around the corner, it seems like in the cyber world, change comes at a breakneck speed. What do we need to know going into those election cycles? Are things changing on the hacking side and the security side at an exponential pace?

Lawson: There was a nefarious actor whose server was shut down by the FBI. Since then, the activity coming out of nation states has dramatically reduced. That doesn't mean it won't pick up again.

HPI: Do you believe the Russian government sought to impact the 2016 presidential election, whether through election system hacking, or fake news, or via social media?

Lawson: I believe that the statements about Russia hacking the DNC data base are likely to be true. It was confirmed to me by the secretary of state from Arizona that she was told by the FBI, in a small Arizona county, a county employee's password and ID were stolen, or compromised. And that's how someone got into the system. She was told by the FBI that it was someone from Russia. Now do I know whether it was the Russian government? No, I don't.

HPI: Do you think somebody knows?

Lawson: I think somebody does.

HPI: You're on the presidential commission and there was some controversy with Kansas Secretary of State Chris Kobach requesting information from states, with Indiana and some 40 other states saying they can't comply due to state code. Yet there was the cross check program in which the federal government would have access to some of this data. So clear this up: What have we given the commission? And what are we going to withhold from the commission?

Lawson: We have not given the commission anything to date.

HPI: What will Indiana give them?

Lawson: In the letter Kobach sent on behalf of himself as a commission member, he asked for any data that was publicly available, including dates of birth, Social Security numbers, driver's license numbers if they were publicly available. Indiana and I as secretary of state can-

not release dates of birth, Social Security numbers, driver's license numbers. I can't do it. But there were some court cases filed and so the commission had to quit asking for and accepting data. I think the federal judge ruled this past week that they could continue that. But to date the commission has not filled out the proper forms here in Indiana to receive the data.

HPI: Has Vice President Pence lobbied you to release this data?

Lawson: Not at all.

HPI: Tell me about your relationship with Vice President Pence in the context of the commission, which he chairs.

Lawson: I was asked by the vice chair, Kobach, if I would serve on the commission. I did not talk with the vice president about that, my service there, except when he was in town at the JW Marriott here. We had a brief moment to speak and he thanked me for my service on the commission. He was there for the beginning of the commission meeting, was very kind and again thanked me for serving.

HPI: Do you think that Pence and Kobach knew there would be state codes that would prevent states from complying?

Lawson: Secretary Kobach is a member of the National Association of Secretaries of

State just as I am, and twice in that letter he did mention "if publicly available." And so, yes, I think he did realize that.

HPI: President Trump has cited massive voter fraud in the 2016 presidential election, yet has revealed no evidence to back up such claims. He, in my view, has issues with the truth. So how you taking what he is saying in the context of your service on the commission?

Lawson: Of the numbers I heard, three to five million fraudulent votes, we have no evidence of that here in Indiana. We've had cases of vote fraud – the St. Joe County issue with Butch Morgan and the Jennings County issue with former State Rep. Mike Marshall, absentee ballot fraud and others – so we know there are examples of fraud and we know we have elections that are very close. The goal is to allow the voters to have confidence in the system, get 100% participation and zero percent fraud.

HPI: Secretary Kobach said recently that we will probably never know who won the 2016 presidential election. That's alarming to me as a journalist and a citizen because it doesn't suggest a lot of trust and integrity in the system. That contrasts with what you're saying, which is you do have trust and believe in the integrity of the Indiana system. So put that into context when you hear such



Kansas Sec. of State Kris Kobach with Vice President Pence.

comments.

Lawson: I didn't hear or see the interview with Secretary Kobach. But I thought the question was, "Do you believe that Hillary won the popular vote?" As you know, the way the U.S. Constitution is set up, one does not have to win the popular vote, but the Electoral (College) votes. And do I believe the election results reflect who our president is? Yes, I do.

HPI: What kind of evidence do you think the commission is going to uncover?

Lawson: I had not met a lot of commission members until last week in Washington; I was truly impressed by the level of knowledge, the talent on the commission. Lots of things were mentioned, not only voter data rolls, but also voting by mail, what laws are there to encourage participation. Do we have laws and processes that discourage or disenfranchise voters? All of those things are going to be looked at. I appreciated the vice president's comments that there are no preconceived notions and no pre-ordained outcomes for this commission.

HPI: So we may learn things that no one expected.

Lawson: That's right. The secretary of state from Maine, Matt Dunlap, says it best, "Sunshine is a great disinfectant."

HPI: HPI columnist Chris Sautter wrote last week suggesting that Kobach and others on the commission have a history of trying to restrict voter access. What can you say on that front?

Lawson: I can't answer for Secretary Kobach. I know that he has worked diligently on removing any illegal voters on the rolls in Kansas. But I can't think of any of his initiatives in Kansas.

HPI: Do you have any desire to restrict access to voters? You've been associated with 2005 legislation on voter ID that the Democrats say is aimed at restricting participation. How do you respond that that criticism? Give me your general philosophy on access restriction as opposed to promoting participation?

Lawson: Participation and security are not mutually exclusive. They have to be considered at the same time, because I don't want any voter's vote cancelled by someone committing fraud. But I would love to have 100% access and 100% participation. Do I believe the photo ID requirement hurts? No, I don't. You were right, I was co-author of that bill in 2005. I believe we should know that when someone comes to the polls, they are who they say they are. In 2008, after voter ID was passed, we had the record turnout for Indiana, 65%. Regarding access, I worked a number of years in the Senate, working with Sue Anne Gilroy after the 2000 election in Florida, and we worked on early voting. We agreed in a bipartisan way that people who come early to vote should not have

to state an excuse or a reason. In Indiana we are one of the few states that has no-excuse early voting, 28 days before the election. I've also encouraged counties to become vote center counties. In 2013, after I became secretary, we worked very hard on the advantages of being a vote center county, which includes early voting locations, allowing a person to vote at any location in their county. They don't have to stay in their precinct.

HPI: How many vote center counties are there?

Lawson: When I came in we had seven and it's increased to 30. I believe in 2018 there will be at least a couple more but probably more than that.

HPI: After the 2000 election, Indiana went through a systemic upgrade of election equipment. Now it's 2017 and a lot of that equipment is getting old. Are we looking at another wave of system upgrades?

Lawson: The Help America Vote Act signed by President George W. Bush in 2002 required states to make some changes. The Congress did send money with that bill. Counties were required to update their voting equipment. They applied through the secretary of state's office with Todd Rokita,

and you're right, it's aging out. A number of counties have replaced their voting equipment that was purchased in 2005 and 2006. Indiana is fortunate to have the Voting System Technical Oversight Program run out of Ball State. All of our equipment here is certified for use. All the vendors will be updating their technology; they'll be going after certifications here, and they are likely to be waiting for an infusion of new voting equipment.

HPI: Will that be funded by the state, or by counties?

Lawson: The taxpayers are going to fund it one way or another, whether the state pays for it or the counties. I've been studying what Georgia does. Georgia purchases the equipment and everyone in the state uses the same equipment. On the other hand, here in Indiana we have five vendors and truly I believe the decentralization of those vendors helps protect elections here. It would be a lot harder to get into five different systems and change the outcome than it would be with one system.

HPI: Any voting reforms you'd like to see, like changing voting hours?

Lawson: If the General Assembly decides we need to open our polls longer, of course I would support it. I think they need to hear from counties that have a small number of loyal poll workers who show up well before the polls open and stay well after they close. I think the General Assembly will hear that from counties. They'll need to send some dollars with it. But keep in mind, we've done everything we can. We vote early here



in Indiana, 28 days before the election. Our county clerks stay open on Saturdays and some of them on Sundays. You can request an absentee ballot for the primary in May of 2018 on Dec. 1 of this year. A clerk can mail it to you as soon as the ballot information has been certified.

HPI: We've just gone through a pretty big vote purge of people who haven't voted since 2014. A lot of people who may have come on to the rolls in 2008 with the Barack Obama movement may have been purged. What impact could this purge have in 2018 and 2020?

Lawson: Well, I don't use the term purge. I use voter list maintenance. When I became secretary, we had not done a voter list maintenance since 2006. And truly, it is a federal requirement. The state put that burden on the counties. Some did it routinely, others didn't because they didn't have the money. So I asked the General Assembly if they would fund a statewide voter list maintenance program and they have done that. It's important to keep in mind that no one is ever removed from the rolls simply for not voting. The way a record does get removed, a voter is contacted twice to correct their information. If the first postcard was returned as undeliverable, we send a second postcard to every voter in Indiana. It's important to note this was uniform and non-discriminatory. If the second postcard is returned, that voter is marked inactive, but if they voted in November 2015, in any election in 2015 or 2016, their status is changed to active again. If they did

not vote after they had been notified and their cards were returned, that's when their record was removed from the rolls. We did remove 481,000 from the records.

HPI: What percentage of that is?

Lawson: Pew Center did some research and their study showed that about one in eight records is inaccurate. About 2.75 million deceased voters are still on the rolls. So it was about 8%. We were about average.

HPI: How many voters are on the rolls in Indiana now?

Lawson: We started out with 4.8 million and now we're about 4.4 million.

HPI: One of the last times we talked last summer, the New York Times said we had some of the lowest voter participation, in the 2014 election, something like 18%. What is our voter participation?

Lawson: You're right, an article that came out of Florida said that Indiana has the lowest voter participation in the country. That is not true. We used the numbers from the Election Assistance Commission and it showed that we were about 43rd in the country, so we were not last. Obviously there is room for improvement. California and New York were behind Indiana. We do voter list maintenance so we can have accurate turnout numbers. We had 58% in the general in 2016, a record number of Hoosiers to turn out to vote.

HPI: That was probably a lot of first-time Trump

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voters and first-time Sanders voters?

Lawson: It could be. After we cleaned those records, if we had done that prior, we would have had a 65% turnout which would have put us in the top 10 states for turnout.

HPI: There were the 12 arrests with the Indiana Voter Registration Project. Marion County Prosecutor Terry Curry said this was not a case of voter fraud, but more of inaccurate forms. Put that in perspective. Some of your Democratic critics are suggesting something nefarious, in the context with Donald Trump alleging that the election was going to be "rigged." Last year was a very surreal year. What do Hoosier voters need to know?

Lawson: I can't talk about the investigation; it's still in Prosecutor Curry's hands. The state police came to us so they could understand voter registration process, laws and requirements; that was my first knowledge of the investigation. We informed the counties that there were at least two counties with some questionable voter registrations. The state police talked to them about it.

HPI: Which two counties?

Lawson: Marion and Hendricks. If the state police were following the trail, they would go to counties and make copies of the registrations. Subsequently, 12 people and an organization were charged with voter registration fraud.

HPI: Are you confident you have mechanisms in place to protect the integrity of the system?

Lawson: Absolutely. Actually, we have not had any complaints of voter fraud issues in this office, but keep in mind those issues go to county election boards first. Someone could contact the local prosecutor first, but it's the local prosecutor who does those investigations. Over time we hear about it through the newspaper unless an individual has called us. We always tell them to take it to the county.

HPI: Was that a tough decision to make, going public with the Voter Registration Project? You were faced with several dilemmas. The Republican presidential nominee was saying the system was rigged, the FBI and the Obama administration were saying the Russians were conducting a cyber attack, and the voter project. When you took the office you probably never dreamed you'd see that kind of perfect storm, coming during an absolutely sensational election.

Lawson: It truly was. We couldn't get the candidates to decide what they were running for awhile. We had statements being made by the candidates and their issues with the election process. Then we had the notice from the FBI as well as the voter registration investigation. There were many stressful hours that the entire staff in this office spent responding to those issues. I couldn't have done it without my staff.

HPI: I've asked this question of Sen. Young, and Reps. Banks, Rokita and Messer and I'll ask you. What we're seeing out of the White House these days and the

way the truth is being handled, and you're going to be one of the top Republicans on the ballot this year, as a Republican, is what you're seeing causing you pause? As a patriotic citizen, I am not an enemy of the American people, but I am alarmed at what we're seeing. Any thoughts? Because your career has been the epitome of integrity and service.

Lawson: I appreciate that comment. I, like every citizen, listen and watch the news reports and can only pray that our country stays safe. I wish the administration success. I know they are all going to have to work hard to



Secretary Connie Lawson with the 2014 Republican ticket of Treasurer Kelly Mitchell and Auditor Suzanne Crouch. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

stay safe and secure in this country.

HPI: You're up for reelection. Are you confident?

Lawson: I am not over confident. We're working hard. I've had a lot of different things on my plate this year. I'm president of the National Association of Secretaries and chairing the cyber security committee for NASS as well. The national association is coordinating national infrastructure, so I have a lot on my plate. But obviously we're going to do everything we can to run a campaign like I've always run a campaign. We're going to work as hard as we can, continue to be out across the state and we're going to continue to improve the office. We've made a lot of progress in the secretary of state's office since I walked in and we'll keep working.

HPI: Some were suggesting you can't serve a full term. Peter Rusthoven did an analysis on that. Are you confident you can serve the full four years if you're reelected?

Lawson: Yes. The constitution is very clear that an appointment does not count as an election and I've only been elected once to this office. So I can run again. We asked for an outside opinion because it's not just me, it's other situations in local and state government that come up from time to time. We asked for it so we would have it for any candidate. ❖

The halycon days of Thierry Devaux

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – On Aug. 24, 2001, we woke up to a joyflight of Frenchman Thierry Devaux, who attempted a parachuting publicity stunt at the Statue of Liberty. Powered by a fan-like propeller strapped to his back, Devaux miscalculated his approach to Miss Liberty’s torch, where he had hoped to land and bungee back to earth. Instead, he snagged the steely flame, then dangled 300 feet above the Hudson for about 30 minutes until NYFD could come to the rescue.



New York Mayor Giuliani was not amused, calling it “a very dangerous thing, a dumb and stupid thing,” because it “endangered rescue workers.”

August 2001 were the halycon days of our republic. The Soviet Union had collapsed, giving American politicians the right to debate what to do with the “peace dividend.” We survived President Clinton’s sexual misconduct and impeachment,

a 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, and Y2K. The year before, when the calendar odometer turned from 1999 and 2000, Americans like myself heralded the new Age of Aquarius, a dawning era of peace and prosperity:

**Harmony and understanding
Sympathy and trust abounding
No more falsehoods or derisions
Golden living dreams of visions
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And the mind’s true liberation**

Of course, we were all in for a rude awakening a little over three weeks after the Devaux stunt. Al-Qaeda sent the terror pilots into the World Trade Center towers across the harbor, Mayor Giuliani churned through the rubble and more than 300 first responders were killed, along with about 3,000 Americans there, at the Pentagon and on Flight 93. America has been at war ever since. We are forced to remove our shoes at the airport and jettison our shampoo. We’ve spent trillions of dollars on public safety, our local police forces have been militarized, and the West is under constant threat of asymmetrical warfare.

The Age of Aquarius seemed to

dissipate with Thierry’s torn parachute.

Today, almost two decades into the 21st Century, the same nagging feeling in the pit of the stomach felt by aviation officials who noticed Arab flight school students were uninterested in learning how to land airliners has manifested here. The “Emoji Movie” is being eclipsed by a modern “Game of Thrones.” The gauzy glint of the white nights of spring face the spray of the red wedding.

These days we are told that North Korean intercontinental ballistic missiles could have the capability of reaching Chicago. All of the military options the U.S. has are being described in the range of “horrific” to “catastrophic.” We could be witnessing the bombing of Toyko for the first time since 1945 just months from now. A protracted and stalemated war around the 38th parallel more than a half century ago is poised for a comeback.

There are Chinese military assets gathering around the Korean peninsula and 100,000 Russian troops maneuvering along NATO’s eastern frontier. President Trump has had a bromance with President Putin few of us understand, won’t issue a full-throated endorsement of NATO’s Article V, though Vice President Pence did earlier this week.

President Trump seems to be intent on waging a trade war with China. This comes after he pulled out of the U.S.-forged Trans Pacific Partnership that would have guided 14 allied nations on U.S. dollar, rule of law, and trade standards. China has since rushed in to fill the void with Chinese currency, foreign aid and its version of law and intellectual property. A trade war with China will be met by retaliation.

The Russians have poked around our election

process here, in France, Germany and other western democracies after invading three neighbors. They have their tentacles in our power grid and other cyber sensitive assets. The thought of waking up one morning with no cell service, networks and cable TV down, the power off and the ATMs not functioning is a nightmare no longer relegated to Hollywood scenewriters.

And we learn that new climate studies predict the earth warming 2 degrees F. by the end of this century, putting us close to the 3.6-degree point of no return when the Amazon jungles collapse, the Greenland ice melts twist the Gulf Stream, and the permafrost melts, releasing vast quanti-



ties of Co2. By century's end, will Florida, Norfolk, Washington, New York, New Orleans and Boston be inhabited or submerged? A child born in 2017 faces a very, very different planet than the one we know this relatively cool summer.

There are President Trump and his administration, who treat the truth as a disposable water bottle, with denials coming forth from the Boy Scouts and Mexico that his claimed phone calls of praise were fabricated. The president is terrified of Special Counsel Robert Mueller, and dozens of observers and commentators on both the right and left are girding for a constitutional crisis. We've witnessed the U.S. Coast Guard commander and the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff suggest they'll defy their president on his out-of-the-blue transgender military ban.

Former CIA director John Brennan said that if Trump fires Mueller, "I think it's the obligation of some executive branch officials to refuse



to carry that out. I would just hope that this is not going to be a partisan issue. That Republicans, Democrats are going to see that the future of this government is at stake and something needs to be done for the good of the future." Some viewed that Aspen Security Forum remark as a marker for coup d'état.

Trump telling friends the White House is a "real dump" suggests that his retreat back to Trump Tower in Manhattan and Mar-A-Lago may not be a far-fetched notion.

By nature, I'm an optimist. Today I feel a confrontation with the dark, jagged soul of pessimism and turmoil. Some spurn a good-natured peace and embrace forces of dysfunction and scorn.

I hope I'm wrong. I'm hoping that Thierry Devaux attempts a comeback and somehow pulls us back from the brink. Wish we could turn back time, to the good old days. ❖

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‘President Pence’ is widely speculated

By JACK COLWELL

SOUTH BEND – Whether Mike Pence will become the next president of the United States – and if so, when – is the subject of widespread speculation. Theories on



when Pence might become president range from election in 2024, as President Trump is completing a second term, to a much quicker move to the Oval Office, when Trump is impeached or resigns after proclaiming he already has made America great again.

Electability is debated. Some political analysts figure that Pence will be viewed as a stabilizing figure in a chaotic Trump administration, thus

electable. Others see the vice president as already tainted by standing so closely with Trump as troubles mount, thus making him unelectable.

Chicago Tribune columnist Steve Chapman writes that a President Pence will come soon because of Trump’s “biggest blunder,” choosing Pence as his running mate. Chapman theorizes that most Republicans in Congress would rather deal with a President Pence, and even Democrats would prefer “a mentally stable right-wing puritan to an unpredictable, thin-skinned narcissist.” So, he says, if Trump continues strange behavior amid more startling disclosures, members of both parties will impeach and oust Trump.

That “biggest mistake” by Trump, Chapman says, was picking Pence, someone well known in Congress and seen by so many as a better alternative.

But wait. Impeachment, if it is to come, seems a long way off. Although a USA Today poll shows half of Americans now saying that Trump should be removed from office, impeachment likely wouldn’t come before special counsel Robert Mueller completes a long, detailed investigation – unless Trump fires Mueller.

And what if Mueller, after the long investigation, finds that some of Trump’s family members and others were just dupes and dopes, but not intentionally colluding with the Russians or doing anything to bring indictments?

Trump could then claim vindication, and his solid base would still be there for a reelection bid in 2020.

While some Democrats say a second term is unthinkable, they didn’t think Trump would win a first term. Democrats don’t seem yet to be getting their act together, getting a unified message and getting away from continued harping about disputes from the last presidential primaries.

If Trump completes a first term and then decides he can’t stand government and declines Republican renomination, Pence certainly would run for president. He would seek the presidency after a second Trump term as well, unless he displeased Trump and was bounced off the ticket.

How viable would Pence be as a presidential candidate? His supporters think he is positioning skillfully to win favor with both the Trump base and party regulars. However, a Vanity Fair article by Abigail Tracy portrays Pence’s master plan for president is going up in smoke. While Pence long was successful in “a miraculous balancing act” of pledging loyalty to Trump “while gliding away from incessant scandal and turbulence,” Tracy writes, he finally tripped up on Trumpcare and “Donnygate.”

She says Pence lost stature in a clumsy and ineffective plea at the National Governors Association meeting for support of a Senate health-care bill that most governors couldn’t stomach. Also, Tracy cites a wobbling in the Pence balancing act in an attempted distancing from the “Donnygate” revelations about the president’s son meeting with Russians. A Pence spokesman said the vice president “is not focused on stories about the campaign, particularly

stories about a time before he joined the ticket.”

That statement, deviating from all-out defense of the Trump family, brought speculation about distancing and concern in Trump World.

Lest he be thrown under the bus by Trump, joining Jeff Sessions there, Pence quickly went back to full-throated defense of everything Trump.



Actually, Trump might hesitate before savaging Pence the way he has attacked his attorney general. With all the discussion now about presidential pardons, Trump could conclude that if Pence is to become president, maybe sooner rather than later, he might need to count on President Pence to pardon him. ❖

Colwell has covered politics over five decades for the South Bend Tribune.

Field emerging for open 6th CD seat

By **BRIAN A. HOWEY**

INDIANAPOLIS – There will almost certainly be two open Congressional seats in the 2018 cycle, the 6th CD held by U.S. Rep. Luke Messer and the 4th CD by U.S. Rep. Todd Rokita, both opting for the U.S. Senate race.

Rokita told the LaPorte Herald-Argus on Tuesday that his entry is "imminent." Messer signaled his intent to run on Facebook last week, and that has kicked off the first flurry of activity with State Sen. Mike Crider and Muncie businessman Jonathan Lamb already declaring. Also pondering runs are Greg Pence, State Sen. Jean Leising, Henry County Councilman Nate LaMar and Don Bates Jr., sources tell HPI.



Pence told HPI on Wednesday that he is concentrating on his role as Messer's campaign finance director through the Aug. 12 annual barbecue, where Messer is expected to officially kick off his campaign. "Until Luke's formal kickoff, I'm just concentrating on that," Pence said. "I've got a lot of encouragement to run. I promised Luke we'd get him to a certain spot. I'm going to finish that and then we'll take a look at it. As Luke's statewide finance chairman, I wish folks get to concentrate on Luke's campaign."

Crider, a two-term Greenfield Republican, was the first to declare. "As soon as information of Luke running for the Senate came out, folks started calling me, saying they thought I'd be a good fit," Crider told HPI on Monday. "I talked to my wife about the possibility. She was interested and we kept exploring. At this point in my life, this is the time."

Crider is 58 years old, reelected in 2016, and retired after 30 years as a conservation officer. In the latter stages of his career there, he was assigned to research pending legislation, developed a number of relationships in the General Assembly, and when Sen. Beverly Gard retired, both she and State Rep. Bob Cherry urged Crider to run in 2012. Since joining the General Assembly, Crider has forged a reputation as a policy wonk. "I've tried to work on social problems like sexual assaults, opiates, mental health and adult protective services. I just enjoy serving in a policy role, helping folks in their everyday lives. I'll take that same work ethic to Washington."

After retiring as a conservation officer, Crider took a job running security at Hancock Regional Hospital in Greenfield. Traveling with Gov. Eric Holcomb in July, Crider was present when he signed four bills dealing with the opioid crisis. Holcomb told HPI that Crider has developed an intense interest in waging the coming fight on an epidemic

sweeping the state.

"That really put me face to face with these addiction issues," Crider explained. "I stayed there for six years, got to know families over that period, mothers sitting out on curbs, sobbing. I would tell them to hang in there. I got to watch this play out at a level you just cannot ignore."

Crider argued "passionately" for needle exchange legislation that Holcomb signed in Richmond. "When I dealt with an addict overdosing, fighting in the emergency room, I was always worried about Hep C, and blood-borne diseases." It prompted him to sponsor legislation that provided crisis intervention techniques for law enforcers. "I was very interested in trying to get more training to officers so they can recognize what they're dealing with when they roll up on a scene and get the situation de-escalated."

Other legislation was to allow the Families Social Services Administration to study "gaps in services" when Crider realized that some Indiana communities had assets in place to deal with epidemic and mental health issues and others had none. Another bill took aim at neo-natal abstinence syndrome, paving the way for the confrontation of expecting mothers who screened positive for drugs on their first visits. "We had to reach them before they came in for birth," he said. And Crider was Senate sponsor of a telemedicine bill. "That helps fill the gaps in these underserved communities. In tweaks to that bill, it now allows physicians in the mental health arena to help refill prescriptions."

Crider realizes that while the Indiana Statehouse



State Sen. Mike Crider during a bill signing ceremony at Richmond State Hospital with Gov. Eric Holcomb in June. (HPI Photo by Brian A. Howey)

and General Assembly is Exhibit A in functional governing, Congress is utterly dysfunctional. "I was speaking Saturday to veterans in Rushville and when I talked about running for Congress, one said, "Senator, you're killing yourself. Why would we vote for you and send you to Washington?"

He responds by saying he has "the ability to collaborate, figure out the challenge, recognize concerns, and figure out how we can move this issue forward and help people in a positive way," he said. "At the end of the day, I've got four grandkids, age nine to three, and I am wor-

ried about what things will be like in the future, unless we get things started.”

Asked about the collapse of the Republican Obamacare repeal/replace in the U.S. Senate, Crider said he backed an idea by State Sen. John Ruckleshaus, who called for a bipartisan presidential commission to study the issues and then make a recommendation. “I liked that idea,” Crider said. “That fits our style, getting folks around the table. That’s where the best ideas come from, to come up with a situation and find a better solution. I’ve watched young families come into the emergency room, so it’s time for an honest discussion. What can we do? What is possible? If it’s done the right way, with an honest discussion, there can be more latitude. It seems like it’s become a political football.”

The other announced candidate is Jonathan Lamb, who said on Tuesday, “Washington, D.C., is failing the American people and Indiana families. Special interests and career politicians are pushing bad policies without any real-world experience in running businesses or creating jobs. As an entrepreneur, I have experienced success and failure. I know the struggles of starting a business and how difficult it is to not only create jobs and grow a company, but just to make ends meet in our current political environment. We don’t need policies that are centered on handing out jobs and subsidies, but rather policies creating opportunities for people and businesses to thrive.”

Lamb is the owner of OptoeV, INC, a provider of U.S. Patent Pending battery-powered electric farm equipment.

Sen. Leising told HPI on Wednesday that she is “seriously considering it.” If she gets in, it would be her third congressional race. In 1994 she nearly upset U.S. Rep. Lee Hamilton in the old 9th CD. “The reason is seven counties in my current district are right in the middle of the 6th,” she said. “In addition, if you count the counties then that were involved, I have actually run and won 13 of the 19 counties. That in itself makes it interesting.”

Leising continues to believe that Messer may eventually return to the 6th CD if his Senate campaign doesn’t gain traction. “I find it really interesting that 10 days ago Messer said he didn’t know if he would run, so I’m waiting to see what he will do. There are people who think that, depending on how the field gets, Messer can change his mind. I want to respect his time line to see whether he’s going to run. If I run, I’ll be ready; I will be taking it very seriously. It’s not an easy campaign.” And she had a realistic perspective on Greg Pence. “If Pence does run, voters won’t know the difference between Greg



Muncie businessman Jonathan Lamb (left) and State Rep. Mike Braun are preparing for 6th CD and U.S. Senate races.

and Mike. Very honestly, his ability to raise funds in D.C. will be greatly enhanced.”

So the 6th CD is likely to be a multi-candidate field, as it was in 2000 when Vice President Mike Pence, in what was then the 2nd CD, defeated Messer, State Rep. Jeff Linder and three other Republicans in the primary to succeed U.S. Rep. David McIntosh, who opted for the gubernatorial race.

Crider and Leising would have regional base support within the 6th, while Pence would likely pick up much of his brother’s base and the related fundraising prowess.

U.S. Senate

Senate field expected to grow

State Rep. Mike Braun told WIBC’s Eric Berman that he is assembling a campaign team and will announce his candidacy in the next week or so. He says people have repeatedly told him they’re turned off by the sniping between Rokita and Messer, and concerned it will leave either congressman weakened for a general election campaign against Democratic incumbent Joe Donnelly. Three candidates making their first runs for office – former Dan Coats aide Mark Hurt, Hamilton County businessman Terry Henderson, and Purdue Polytechnic Institute New Albany director Andrew Takami – have already declared.

Braun told WIBC he’d combine a private-sector record as owner of a Jasper distribution company with government experience from his two terms in the House. Braun’s positioning himself as a “problem-solver” in both roles. He boasts he played a role in the House in crafting the last two years’ road funding bills. And he argues his business experience gives him a leg up on the health care debate that’s stalemated the Senate. He says he’d like to see something similar to the self-insurance plan his company created for

its employees, with health savings accounts and full coverage for preventive medicine.

Rokita said his entry into the race is “imminent” (Gard, LaPorte Herald Argus). “I’ve been in spirited conventions before,” Rokita said. “It’s okay, because it gets people talking about the race and particularly about what is the right way forward. Nobody is talking about Joe Donnelly. They’re talking about the fact that Todd Rokita is the better candidate, and I think that’s fine.” Rokita said he’s never run a negative campaign ad, but he expected the mud to fly in the general election. “Whether it’s me or somebody else, this is going to be one of those races – because Joe Donnelly is the most vulnerable Democrat in the country – where third parties are going to do negative

ads," Rokita said. "It's going to be a smash-mouth-football kind of race because there are many contrasts to be drawn out."

State Sen. Mike Delph told HPI on Wednesday that there is "no new update" on his candidacy. In June, Delph said the race was wide open with a "conservative lane" for him if he chose to enter.

One twist on the Messer/Rokita showdown comes with the remnants of President Trump's Indiana campaign. Rex Early and Tony Samuel, who served as the top leadership on Trump's Indiana campaign operation, penned a letter a week ago hailing Rokita as a loyal Trump supporter throughout the election. Messer's camp swatted aside the characterization. But while Greg Pence praised both Early and Samuel as friends, he said that there's been a "misunderstanding. Rex and Tony don't speak for the Trump campaign ... it's not a correct statement and it was made by two individuals who, at this point, are no longer affiliated with the Trump campaign."

NRSC targeting Donnelly

The national campaign committee for Senate Republicans is running a Facebook ad targeting Sen. Joe Donnelly's ties to a family arts and crafts company that outsources some of its labor to Mexico (Lange, IndyStar). The 13-second advertisement comes on the heels of an Associated Press story published earlier this month that found Donnelly made at least \$15,001 in dividends last year and had as much as \$50,000 worth of stock in Stewart Superior Corp., a company that outsourced labor. In response, Donnelly sold his stock in the company, stating the issue was a "distraction." The digital ad will run statewide through August.

General Assembly

SD20 field filling up

Six Republicans have filed for SD20 with the caucus set for Sept. 6. The field includes Hamilton County Councilman Brad Beaver, Carmel Council President Sue Finkam, Joe Morris of Carmel, Dan Schmidt of Westfield, Victoria Spatz and Noblesville Council President Megan Wiles, who Sen. Luke Kenley endorsed.

Cities

3 declare for open LaPorte mayor

Three men have declared themselves candidates for the LaPorte mayor position being vacated Aug. 14 by Blair Milo (Maddux, South Bend Tribune). The early candidates are Leigh Morris, Roger Galloway and Mark Krentz. The caucus will take place on Aug. 11. Morris, 83, was president and CEO of LaPorte Hospital for more than 20 years prior to serving as mayor from 2004 to 2007. Galloway, a 68-year-old retired truck driver, has been on city council for six years and unsuccessfully challenged Milo in

2015. Krentz, 64, is talent attraction coordinator for the Greater LaPorte Economic Development Corporation and serves on the city's Board of Public Works and Safety and its Redevelopment Commission. His father was mayor from 1996 to 1999.

Hayden declares for Evansville Council

The first candidate who wants to fill a vacant Evansville City Council seat filed for the position Wednesday (Evans, Evansville Courier & Press). John Hayden, 34, is a tax manager with Shoe Carnival. The newcomer to local politics hopes to replace Anna Hargis, who resigned from her 3rd Ward City Council post last week to accept a new job. Vanderburgh County Republicans will hold a party caucus Aug. 12 to decide who will fill that seat for the next two years.

Presidential

Pence PAC relies on Indiana donors

Vice President Pence raised more than \$540,000 in less than six weeks for his leadership PAC, relying heavily on his Indiana base of supporters to fuel his new political operation, new filings show (Schouten & Groppe). Indiana donors contributed more than \$253,000 to the Great America Committee, accounting for nearly half the donations to the fundraising committee the former Indiana governor launched in mid-May, according to a report filed Monday with the Federal Election Commission. It's rare for a sitting vice president to form his own fundraising committee. Pence's move, amid growing White House turmoil, has raised questions about his political ambitions. Top donors from Indiana included Republican National Committee member John Hammond; former state party GOP chair Al Hubbard; and Bob Grand, one of the state's top GOP fundraisers and a veteran lawyer and lobbyist. They all gave the maximum contribution of \$5,000, as did Grand's wife, Melody, and Fred Fehsenfeld.

Zuckerberg staffing up

Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and his wife, Priscilla Chan, have hired Democratic pollster Joel Benenson, a former top adviser to President Barack Obama and the chief strategist to Hillary Clinton's failed 2016 presidential campaign, as a consultant, according to a person familiar with the hire. Zuckerberg and Chan have vowed to give away 99 percent of their Facebook shares, worth an estimated \$45 billion, to charity. Bringing on Benenson is the latest sign that they're pushing their philanthropic work more heavily into the political and policy world. In January, the couple hired David Plouffe, campaign manager for Obama's 2008 presidential run, as president of policy and advocacy. Ken Mehlman, who ran President George W. Bush's 2004 reelection campaign, also sits on the board. The couple also brought on Amy Dudley, a former communications adviser to Virginia Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine. ❖

Let states determine their health care future

By **JOSHUA CLAYBOURN**

EVANSVILLE – As GOP attempts at federal health-care reform continue to flounder, John Boehner added fuel to the fire last month with remarkably prescient prophecy about the chances of his former Republican colleagues successfully passing some sort of repeal and replacement of the Affordable Care Act.



“Now, they’re never – they’re not going to repeal and replace Obamacare. . . in the 25 years that I served in the United States Congress, Republicans never, ever one time agreed on what a healthcare proposal should look like. Not once,” he said.

Plenty of evidence backs Boehner up. Other than vague, occasional references to the free market, Republicans lack a comprehensive ideological approach to healthcare policy. That’s a sad reality for an industry representing one-sixth of the national economy. It’s time for Congress to embrace a new prescription for our national healthcare headache: Unleash the states.

Indiana Gov. Eric Holcomb wants more flexibility at the state level and “greater control of federal health care dollars being spent in Indiana.” Holcomb often defends Healthy Indiana Plan 2.0 and avoids offering too many specifics, but many believe he favors more free market reforms like reconnecting healthcare buyers with sellers and reducing perverse incentives.

Meanwhile, California wants a single payer system that would dramatically expand government’s presence in medical care. Under a proposal introduced earlier this year by State Sen. Richard Lara, California’s new system would “cover all medical expenses for every resident regardless of income or immigration status, including inpatient, outpatient, emergency services, dental vision, mental health and nursing home care.” The state would have no copays, deductibles, or preauthorization for procedures. Private

insurance companies would be prohibited from competing with the government.

Republicans worry that California’s system stifles innovation and drives up costs, while Democrats worry that a market-based approach hurts the medically vulnerable in favor of corporate profits. Both Indiana and California see their approach as fiscally responsible. Why not let both states have their way and see which works better? All 50 states can serve as laboratories trying policy experiments without risk to the rest of the country.

Thus far Republican proposals for healthcare tout greater state-level flexibility, but that “flexibility” only exists within a rigid structure and set of rules established by Washington.

This week some Senate Republicans proposed giving states block grants for health programs and allow states significant control on whether to keep, modify, or discard key Obamacare insurance regulations. Under this Graham-Cassidy amendment, each state would receive a set level of federal assistance based on the size of its eligible population, cost of care, and other factors. If a state’s eligible population grew, the amount it received would likewise increase. Congress would give states guidelines to ensure adequate coverage, like requirements covering preexisting conditions, but states would be free to craft their own system to best address the needs of patients in their states.

This is certainly a step in the right direction, but it still involves funnelling billions of tax dollars through the Washington bureaucracy. Why not let states make all decisions about healthcare entitlements within their boundaries?

Imposing a one-size-fits-all solution will continue presenting problems to whichever party holds the majority on Capitol Hill. Congress should simply listen to the people

and let them have the healthcare they want. Thirty-eight million Californians want one thing. Six and a half million Hoosiers want something else. Let the people of each state decide their own destinies. ❖

Claybourn is a Republican attorney from Evansville.



Then-Gov. Mike Pence and Lt. Gov. Eric Holcomb after the latter was sworn in during a March 2016 ceremony. Both advocated state emphasis on health reform. (HPI Photo by Mark Curry)

Wishing for Cromwell

By CRAIG DUNN

KOKOMO – Where is Oliver Cromwell when you need him? I can't believe I'm saying this, but it is time to dissolve Parliament and call for new elections. The grand ruling coalition has fallen apart and it is now time to take our great national issues back to the people for their input. The failed uneasy marriage of personal fiefdoms that we call the United States Senate has disintegrated into a



glorified exercise of nitpicking and removal of lint from the bellybuttons of government.

There is a reason why a statue of Cromwell stands guard over the British Parliament. Earning his historical spurs as a champion for the elected voice of the people, he later became known as the man who knew a dysfunctional government when he saw it. His solution to the never-ending squabbles and inaction

of Parliament was to send its members home, back to the people who elected them.

In a speech that could be given by Donald Trump or any fed-up American, Cromwell ended the "Long Parliament" with this zinger: "It is high time for me to put an end to your sitting in this place, which you have dishonored by your contempt of all virtue, and defiled by your practice of every vice; ye are a factious crew, and enemies to all good government; ye are a pack of mercenary wretches, and would like Esau sell your country for a mess of pottage, and like Judas betray your God for a few pieces of money.

"Is there a single virtue now remaining amongst you? Is there one vice you do not possess? Ye have no more religion than my horse; gold is your God; which of you have not bartered your conscience for bribes? Is there a man amongst you that has the least care for the good of the Commonwealth?

"**Ye sordid prostitutes** have you not defiled this sacred place, and turned the Lord's temple into a den of thieves, by your immoral principles and wicked practices? Ye are grown intolerably odious to the whole nation; you were deputed here by the people to get grievances redressed, are yourselves gone! So! Take away that shining bauble there, and lock up the doors.

"In the name of God, go!" Oliver Cromwell, April 20, 1653.

In one quick and blunt action, Cromwell drained the swamp.

We are presently confronted with a United States

Senate that consists of 100 semi-imperial potentates, armed with arcane rules that give each out-sized power and importance. Each senator has only to face the electorate every six years. Armed with a mountain of special interest cash, each senator uses an army of high-paid political consultants to help make the voters forget the previous six years. "Forget about the nine times I voted for expansion of the national debt and just remember the time last month when I voted for the motion to grant debate over a motion to defund eggplant research."

Although I love our Constitution, there are distinct times when I wistfully long for the simplicity of a parliamentary form of government. While there certainly can be dysfunction in the British government, and the work product can be just as failed as ours, the ability to admit abject failure and force an election showdown at any point with a "no confidence" vote offers a slight glimmer of hope to the voters.

I would enjoy seeing the voters getting a shot at the obstructionists in the United States Senate. Call a no confidence vote, dissolve the Senate and give the electorate a chance to give John McCain, Lisa Murkowski and Susan Collins a beating at the polls. But don't stop there! Give us Hoosiers a chance right now to throw "Slick" Joe Donnelly out on his ear. Time for that charlatan to stop talking like a bi-partisan voice of reason here in Indiana and then serving as a Charlie Shumer and Nancy Pelosi stooge in the hallowed halls of Congress.



Yes, sometimes you just can't wait for the next election. In some third world countries, they march in the streets, call general strikes and change governments as often as you and I change underwear. I'm not advocating for that sort of political upheaval here in the United States. I just wish the common guy could reach out with his vote more often and smite the Philistines up against the side of their heads.

So what's a feller to do when you can't call for new elections and your nausea levels exceed the ability of Tums to bring that needed relief? We've got to turn up the anger levels. Senators who are more concerned about their own senatorial prerogatives and fiefdoms than addressing critical national problems need to be hit where it hurts. First, cut off campaign contributions to these senators and the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee. Second, show the wayward senators a good dose of Republican anger at town hall meetings. Third, write letters to the editor calling out these senators. Fourth, open up a campaign on social media. Fifth, pour over campaign finance reports and expose the masters of these recalcitrant senators. Finally, primary, primary, primary! Nothing sends a better message than taking an overstuffed, self-important senator out in a primary.

Oliver Cromwell went to Parliament to battle the

abuses of the English king and stayed on to battle the forces of inertia and contempt. Who will our Cromwell be in the United States Senate? There is a screaming "help wanted" sign hanging on the doors of the Capitol.

Cromwell served his country well during his lifetime. After his death created a leadership void, England restored the monarchy. Did the newly restored monarchy act immediately to address the needs of the English people? Nope. It dug up Cromwell's body, hung it and beheaded the lifeless corpse.

Some kings just never learn!

Some senators never learn unless they are taught a lesson. Let school begin! ❖

Dunn is a former chairman of the Howard County Republican Party.

Buncich heads for a rare corruption trial

By RICH JAMES

MERRILLVILLE – Unless something drastic happens in the next couple of days, Lake County Sheriff John Buncich is going to trial on charges that he accepted kickbacks from tow truck operators. The trial will be in U.S. District Court in Hammond. The government alleges that Buncich accepted cash and checks from towing operators in exchange for the right to tow vehicles for county police.



Should Buncich actually go on trial, it would be counter to what

generally happens with public corruption cases in Lake County. Rarely does an elected official actually go on trial. In virtually all cases in the last several decades, the defendant has entered into a plea agreement with the government. The plea agreement generally results in less prison time than if the defendant had gone to trial and lost.

Not only does Buncich deny taking kickbacks from towing businesses, he is putting the blame on Timothy Downs, his second in command and the former president of the Indiana Fraternal Order of Police. In pretrial

motions, Buncich alleges that Downs acted on his own to collect money from the towing firms. Downs, however, entered into his own plea agreement early on and will testify for the government.

Two towing firm operators – William Szarmach of Hobart, the owner of a Lake Station towing company, and Scott Jurgensen, owner of Sampson's Towing of Merrillville – have entered into plea agreements as well and will testify against the sheriff.

Buncich served as sheriff from 1994 to 2002 and was reelected in 2010 after sitting out for eight years. The indictment already has cost Buncich. He was elected Lake County Democratic chairman in 2014. He didn't seek reelection in March because of the indictment. Ironically, Buncich broke a tie between Lake County Commissioner



Mike Repay and Schererville attorney Jim Wieser when he opted for Wieser to be the new chairman.

Since the indictment, politics has been heavy in the county as several potential sheriff candidates have surfaced. The only question is whether there will be a precinct election to replace Buncich or will things be decided in 2018 when his term expires. ❖

Rich James has been writing about state and local government and politics for more than 30 years. He is a columnist for The Times of Northwest Indiana.

A tale of two urban forests

By **MORTON MARCUS**

INDIANAPOLIS – Hoosier cities often have natural areas left over from the conversion of woods to farmland and the subsequent urban development. These are patches of land, stands of trees, and vistas along waterways as yet undisturbed by the generations preceding us. We, then, have the opportunity to preserve a natural area in our time and allow later generations to explore their land use options.



Such opportunities feed greed, ego, and civic virtue alike. There is a section of Crown Hill Cemetery in Indianapolis that illustrates this truism. Here centuries-old trees survive along the northern edge of the property. In 2006 and

2007, Crown Hill, a private enterprise, attempted to sell the land for development as a commercial strip mall. A band of citizens, guided in part by the Indiana Forest Alliance (IFA), stopped that desecration.

Recently, the U.S. Veterans Administration sought a site to honor the cremated remains of those who served their country. What better place than Crown Hill where distinguished Hoosiers (including poet Riley and gangster Dillinger) have been interred? Crown Hill and the VA cut a deal for \$850,000 and the VA designed a facility that would have cut down the ancient trees. The VA dutifully posted a notice in the Federal Register. How often do you read the Federal Register?

Pressed by concerned citizen groups, the VA held public meetings at which the arrogance and narrow-focus of the bureaucratic mind was fully displayed. And they gave out a party favor, emery boards, the

perfect gift from those who are abrasive and out of touch with concerned citizens.

Finally, with the delayed help of a few elected officials, the VA exchanged the disputed property for other land at the cemetery. A private foundation then matched the VA purchase price, to preserve the forest's distinctive assets, and donate it to the city for a nature park. The last I heard, Crown Hill was stalling, no doubt seeking more money, in their perpetual lust for More. What steps will the cemetery take next to obtain more money, more attention, and more business? Will they transform the property from a resting place to a tourist attraction?

This brings us to another, current ill-advised effort in Indianapolis. A developer wants to cut down the small forest at the corner of Haverstick and 86th Street to build a commercial/residential facility. Readers in Jasper and Kendallville might not be familiar with those acres. They abut the Keystone expressway and the heavily developed, commercial stretch along 86th and 82nd streets from the Fashion Center east to the Castleton Mall and beyond. There is no evidence added commercial space is needed in this already congested Indianapolis area. But developers don't have to demonstrate community need. All they require is financing and a compliant zoning board.

Again, a group of citizens is battling to preserve the woods, to maintain a remembrance of our inheritance and our responsibility to future generations. Wish them luck. ❖

Mr. Marcus is an economist, writer, and speaker who may be reached at mortonjmarcus@yahoo.com.

Indiana surplus and balances for 2017

By **LARRY DeBOER**

WEST LAFAYETTE – The most wonderful time of the year has come and gone for those who follow the Indiana state budget. On July 19, the State Budget Agency presented its accounting of what happened to revenues, spending and balances in fiscal 2017. The state ran an annual surplus of \$42 million, and ended with balances of \$1.78 billion, down from \$2.24 billion in 2016.



Wait a minute, says anyone who's ever kept a checkbook. If I earn more than I spend, the balance in my checkbook goes up. What kind of arithmetic causes an annual surplus to produce a decline in balances? Calculating surpluses and deficits can be tricky. When you calculate the surplus,

what counts as revenue? What counts as spending?

To get that \$42 million surplus, the state counts all the general fund revenues received from sales, income and other taxes, and from charges and fees. That was a little less than \$15.5 billion in fiscal 2017. It then calculates the amount of spending, as appropriations plus some adjustments, less "reversions." Reversions are money authorized in the budget but never spent. Revenues actually received, less money actually spent, gave that \$42 million.

As the late-night advertisers say, "But wait, there's more!" There is spending not yet counted. In particular, three big amounts: Major Moves 2020 distributions, excess reserves to the state highway fund, and excess reserves to the local road and bridge matching grant fund. Those three add up to \$528 million.

This was spending on roads, related to the state's efforts to provide road funding prior to the motor fuel tax increases passed this year. Counting these three, spending was about \$16 billion. By that arithmetic, the state spent more than it collected in 2017. Balances dropped by \$467 million. You can find these numbers on the Budget Agency's website, at www.in.gov/sba/2714.htm.

An annual deficit sounds bad, but what really counts is how much money the state has in balances at the end of the year. Our \$1.78 billion is 11.5% of general fund spending. Is that too little? Too much? Let's make a couple of comparisons.

The Pew Charitable Trusts provide data about the balances kept by each state. You can find it by searching "Pew reserves and balances." It shows 2016 figures, since there hasn't been time to analyze 2017 balances yet, but that's the best we can do.

Indiana's balances at 11.5% would have ranked 13th highest among the states on the 2016 list. That would be the most among our neighbors. Ohio had balances at 9.5% of spending, Michigan at 7.3%, and Kentucky at 5.3%.

A budgeting rule of thumb says that balances need to be at least 5% of spending to cover cash flow. Less than that and states may have trouble paying their bills on time. Illinois' balances were 2.1% of spending in 2016, and they are having trouble paying their bills. Indiana's balances rank near the top quarter of all states, and at the top of our near neighbors.

Here's another comparison. Aside from cash flow, the state needs balances to cover unexpected shortfalls in revenues. Budgets are made with predicted revenues, and sometimes actual revenues fall short. That's been the rule in Indiana lately. Our revenues have fallen short of budget-year predictions for the last four years straight, by an average of about \$220 million per year. This has not been a problem, because Indiana has enough balances to cover small shortfalls.

During 2009 to 2011, the three fiscal years affected by the Great Recession, revenues fell short of predictions by about \$900 million a year. We hope that never happens again. If it were to happen this year, though, and we made no tax or spending changes, balances would be cut in half to about \$900 million. That would be 5.7% of spending, just above that rule of thumb minimum for cash flow. We have enough balances to handle one year of severe recession, and still pay our bills on time.

We reduced balances in 2017 because we wanted to use the money to deliver state services. That's what taxes are for, after all. But we didn't go overboard. Indiana's balances show a state in good fiscal health.

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YOUR FRIENDS ALL HANG OUT HERE... DO YOU?

Peggy Noonan, Wall Street Journal: The president's primary problem as a leader is not that he is impetuous, brash or naive. It's not that he is inexperienced, crude, an outsider. It is that he is weak and sniveling. It is that he undermines himself almost daily by ignoring traditional norms and forms of American masculinity. He's not strong and self-controlled, not cool and tough, not low-key and determined; he's whiny, weepy and self-pitying. He throws himself, sobbing, on the body politic.



He's a drama queen. It was once said, sarcastically, of George H.W. Bush that he reminded everyone of her first husband. Trump must remind people of their first wife. Actually his wife, Melania, is tougher than he is with her stoicism and grace, her self-discipline and desire to show the world respect by presenting herself with dignity. Half the president's tweets show utter weakness. They are plaintive, shrill little cries, usually just after dawn. "It's very sad that Republicans, even some that were carried over the line on my back, do very little to protect their president." The brutes. Actually they've been laboring to be loyal to him since Inauguration Day. "The Republicans never discuss how good their health care bill is." True, but neither does Mr. Trump, who seems unsure of its content. In just the past two weeks, of the press, he complained: "Every story/opinion, even if should be positive, is bad!" Journalists produce "highly slanted & even fraudulent reporting." They are "DISTORTING DEMOCRACY." They "fabricate the facts." It's all whimpering accusation and finger-pointing: Nobody's nice to me. Why don't they appreciate me? The way American men used to like seeing themselves, the template they most admired, was the strong silent type celebrated in classic mid-20th century films—Gary Cooper, John Wayne, Henry Fonda. In time the style shifted, and we wound up with the nervous and chatter. More than a decade ago the producer and writer David Chase had his Tony Soprano mourn the disappearance of the old style: "What they didn't know is once they got Gary Cooper in touch with his feelings they wouldn't be able to shut him up!" The new style was more like that of Woody Allen. His characters couldn't stop talking about their emotions, their resentments and needs. They were self-justifying as they acted out their cowardice and anger. But he was a comic. It was funny. He wasn't putting it out as a new template for maleness. Donald Trump now is like an unfunny Woody Allen. Meanwhile the whole world is watching, a world that contains predators. How could they not be seeing this weakness, confusion and chaos and thinking it's a good time to cause some trouble? ❖

Kevin Williamson, National Review: Trump is the political version of a pickup artist, and Republicans — and America — went to bed with him convinced that he was something other than what he is. Trump inherited his fortune but describes himself as though he were a self-made man. We did not elect Donald Trump; we elected the

character he plays on television. He has had a middling career in real estate and a poor one as a hotelier and casino operator but convinced people he is a titan of industry. He has never managed a large, complex corporate enterprise, but he did play an executive on a reality show. He presents himself as a confident ladies' man but is so insecure that he invented an imaginary friend to lie to the New York press about his love life and is now married to a woman who is open and blasé about the fact that she married him for his money. He fixates on certain words ("negotiator") and certain classes of words (mainly adjectives and adverbs, "bigly," "major," "world-class," "top," and superlatives), but he isn't much of a negotiator, manager, or leader. He cannot negotiate a health-care deal among members of a party desperate for one, can't manage his own factionalized and leak-ridden White House, and cannot lead a political movement that aspires to anything greater than the service of his own pathetic vanity. ❖

Dan Carden, NWI Times: I recently attracted significant online attention for all the wrong reasons after writing a tweet that could be interpreted as an attack on the survivors of the sinking of the U.S.S. Indianapolis. Let me be clear: I have the utmost respect for the sailors on the Indianapolis and the important work they did under near-impossible conditions to bring an end to World War II. I regret that my tweet may have been viewed as making fun of their harrowing experience. That certainly was not my intention, and I apologize to anyone who may have come away with that impression. This incident has reminded me of the need to more carefully choose my words when posting items online and fully consider how others might be affected by and react to them — a lesson in civility that everyone can benefit from. ❖

Howard Kurtz, Fox News: Washington's leaky culture appears to be unstoppable. In the space of just 24 hours, the president, his new chief of staff and his summarily dispatched communications director were the target of damaging or embarrassing leaks. And remember, this is supposed to be a new era, with a four-star general running a much tighter ship. As a journalist I thrive on being able to find out what's going on behind the scenes. But in this administration I continue to be amazed at how much stuff is whispered to reporters in furtherance of personal agendas. Anthony Scaramucci, who came in as communications director with loud proclamations about firing leakers, was himself the target of a gusher of leaks after being fired Monday by chief of staff John Kelly. One unnamed White House official told Politico, "No way could he work with Kelly. His antics over the past week were crazy by any standard." History would suggest there's no way to stop leaks. Richard Nixon failed, even after creating the "plumbers" unit, a covert investigative group whose techniques included burglary. ❖

Trump poll numbers dive

QUINNIPIAC — President Donald Trump plunges to a new low as American voters disapprove 61 - 33 percent of the job he is doing, according to a Quinnipiac University national poll released today. White men are divided 47 - 48 percent and Republicans approve 76 - 17 percent. White voters with no college degree, a key part of the president's base, disapprove 50 - 43 percent. Today's approval rating is down from a 55 - 40 percent disapproval in a June 29 survey. This is President Trump's lowest approval and highest disapproval number since he was inaugurated. American voters say 54 - 26 percent that they are embarrassed rather than proud to have Trump as president. Voters say 57 - 40 percent he is abusing the powers of his office and say 60 - 36 percent that he believes he is above the law and 62 - 34 percent that he is not honest. "It's hard to pick what is the most alarming number in the troubling trail of new lows for President Donald Trump," said pollster Tim Malloy. "Profound embarrassment over his performance in office and deepening concern over his level-headedness have to raise the biggest red flags. The daily drip drip of missteps and firings and discord are generating a tidal wave of bad polling numbers. Is there a wall big enough to hold it back?"



Farm groups fret Trump immigration

WASHINGTON — A bill endorsed by President Donald Trump that would change the U.S. immigration system may harm farm labor (Hoosier Ag Today). The bill, by Senators Tom Cotton (R-AR) of Arkansas and David Perdue (R-GA), would reduce the number of legal immigrants coming into the United

States and emphasize highly educated immigrants over what is regarded as the low-skilled laborers, which could be interpreted to mean those in agriculture. The Reforming American Immigration for a Strong Economy, or RAISE Act, does not target the H2A program, which brings in temporary workers. However, the bill would have implications for illegal immigrants who may try to qualify for permanent residency and for the prospect of bringing in workers in the livestock and dairy industries, which need year-round workers.

Trump signs bill with Donnelly help

WASHINGTON — President Trump signed bipartisan legislation that Sen. Joe Donnelly helped shape, which will increase sanctions on Russia, Iran, and North Korea. The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act will: increase sanctions on Iran for its ballistic missile program, support for terrorism, human rights violations, and transfers of weapons to or from Iran; strengthen U.S. sanctions against Russia in response to Russian interference in the 2016 elections; and sanction North Korean shipping and foreign entities that provide financial services to North Korea or those that produce goods using North Korean prison labor or forced labor.

Pruitt meets with Holcomb

INDIANAPOLIS — Scott Pruitt, the head of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, met Wednesday with Gov. Eric Holcomb as part of Pruitt's "State Action Tour" to discuss the administration's plans to dismantle and redefine the federal Clean Water Rule (Bowman, IndyStar). Pruitt's visit to Indiana is one that many state environmental and conservation groups said they would have loved to be a part of — had they known about it. During Pruitt's tour stop — the EPA

administrator's sixth in three weeks — he met with Holcomb, Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch and "other state officials," according to a release sent by the EPA press office. It appears Pruitt made no effort to also meet with environmental groups.

Muncie schools close; bus chaos

MUNCIE — In a somewhat stunning turn of events, Muncie Community Schools has conceded that its first day of school transportation woes were so bad that day No. 2 can't yet happen (Slabaugh, Muncie Star Press). Just after 6 p.m. Wednesday, MCS officials announced on social media and confirmed to The Star Press that all schools will be closed on Thursday. What seemed like endless problems transporting students on Wednesday prompted furious social media posts by parents throughout the day.

BSA, Mexico deny Trump phone calls

WASHINGTON — Has President Trump told you about the time the head of the Boy Scouts called to say his was the best speech ever delivered to the more than century-old organization? What about when the president of Mexico picked up the telephone to let him know that his tough enforcement efforts at the border were paying off handsomely? The anecdotes, both of which Mr. Trump told over the last week, were similar in that they appeared to be efforts to showcase broad support for the president when his White House has been mired in turmoil. But they also had another thing in common, the White House conceded on Wednesday: Neither was true. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, the White House press secretary, confirmed at her daily briefing what the Boy Scouts and the Mexican government had already asserted publicly, which is that neither phone call that Mr. Trump referred to had occurred.